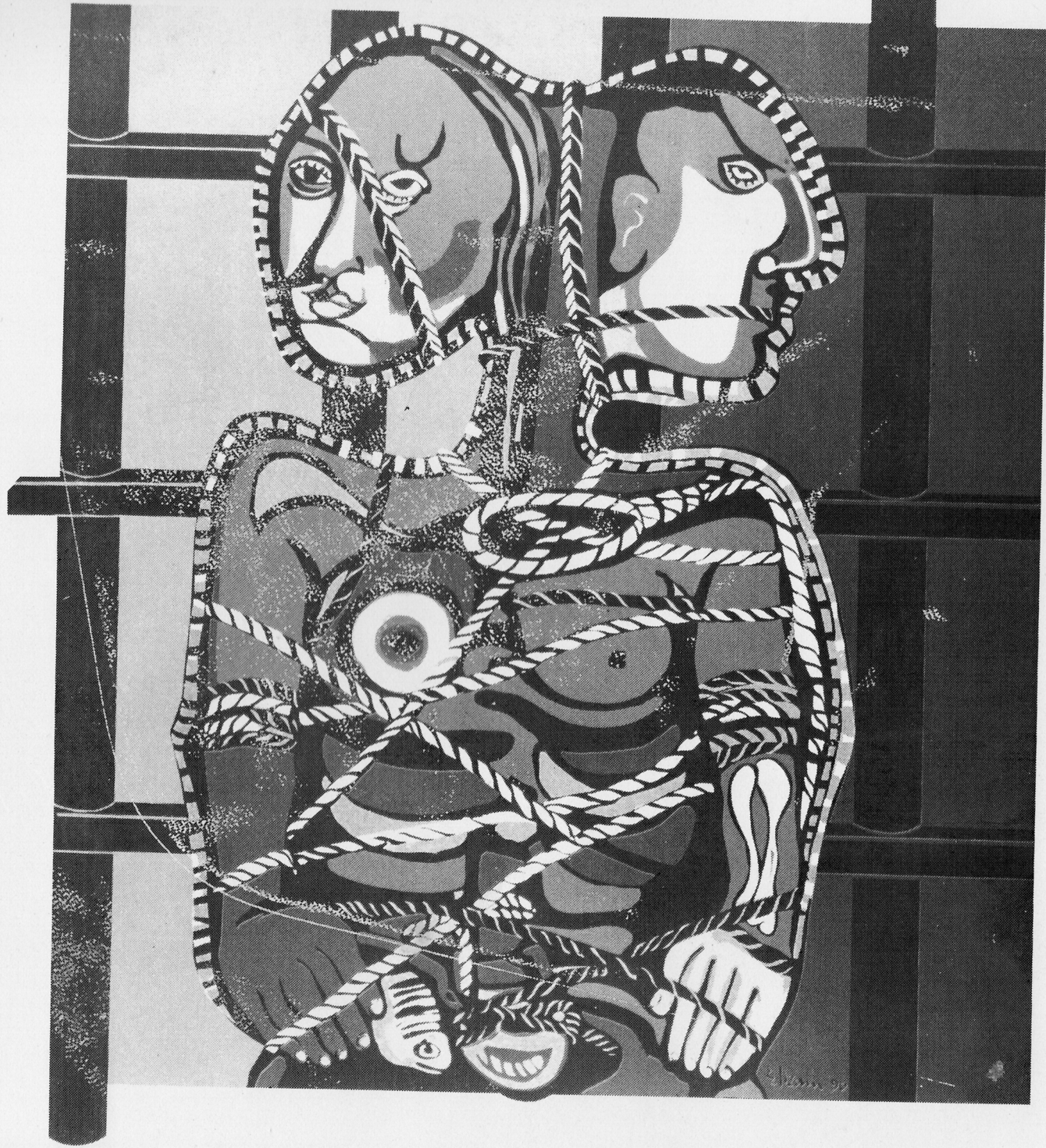


ART OF RESISTENCE

Arte de Resistencia

Exhibition Catalog



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The Language of Art

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...verses are not, as people imagine, simply feelings (those one has early enough)—they are experiences. For the sake of a single verse, one must see many cities, men and things... And still it is not yet enough to have memories... For it is not yet the memories themselves. Not till they have turned to blood within us, to glance and gesture, nameless and no longer to be distinguished from ourselves—not till then can it happen that in a most rare hour the first word of a verse arises in their midst and goes forth from them.

—Rainer Maria Rilke

In studying the Tibetan Book of the Dead, it is suggested in the preface that Western readers start from the moment of rebirth, reentry into the world, and read backwards toward death. This is a solution suggested again and again in Kabbalistic and related works. If there is a philosophy, a general principle of order, to be discovered which does not apply meaning before fact but which restores meaning and allows for creative perception, perhaps it must be found in this way—by going backwards from the simplest perception to the complex formulations which order our experience.

This is not a new idea, but with the growth of popularity and the subsequent increase in information about dialectical philosophy, particularly Phenomenology and Marxism, there occurs the possibility of a bridge between Eastern and Western philosophy, between analytic and dialectical philosophy, between logic and poetry, experience and thought.

The meeting ground is caused by the emphasis on the importance of two words—relationship and process. The shift is from “things” to the relationship between things. Function or action become of predominant importance. The emphasis at the same time switches from the use of the word “object” to the use of the word “subject.” The experiencing subject, the human being, becomes central. People are no longer machines made up of intricate but calculable mechanisms, they are complex human beings with feeling and emotion.

A dialectical philosophy searches for broad general principles of order. It is not built up inductively by generalizing from a series of occurrences; it rests on analogies gained from an understanding of relationship. The emphasis is on an understanding of similarities and differences, rather than on statistics, as an image in a poem is built upon the discovery of a relationship between things not ordinarily related. Bacon, in his essays on scientific method, describes the

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invention of the compass as something that could not have happened through ordinary logical research. Discovery is a flash of insight—a momentary and unique synthesis of two of more seemingly contradictory objects, objects which to logic seem entirely unrelated.

Dialectical philosophy is a philosophy of method. It implies not a throwing aside of data, but a new, a radical means of interpreting historical data in the light of new material. It depends on situation, on context, rather than on an isolated artificial environment. An object, or subject, becomes a point of focus in a field, rather than an alienated piece of matter. The difference is one of attitude. Unity becomes the underlying base of human existence.

But even a philosophy like Phenomenology is still paralyzed by certain philosophical prejudices, by a reluctance to admit experience as evidence, as fact, because experience is something that can happen only once, to one individual. It is a unique occurrence, an interpretation. As a new attitude toward the human being has provided, a new attitude toward science itself must occur. Experience does fulfill the most important scientific criterion—although it is not directly repeatable, it allows prediction. It can never be cut open, examined, pinned on a wall, but it can give meaning by being assimilated, by being gathered up and held.

In the Zohar one reads, “The recitals of the law are the vestment of the Law. Woe to him who takes that vestment for the Law itself!” In emphasizing unity, relationship, process, event, there is a danger of going to the opposite extreme and neglecting the fact that a relationship occurs between specific things, people or objects. Artists cannot forget this because they must direct their process of expression through certain physical processess—through paint, through an instrument, through notation, through words. The poet must deal with the physical aspect of works—their rhythm, their tone their weight. The poem itself is not the experience, it is a trigger gauged to set off an experience—either between the poem and the poet or the poem and the reader. And it is through this combination of relationships that the experience which is the poem is lived.

The primary concern of the Phenomenologists is to find an adequate and precise method of examing perception, that means through which people understand and inhabit their world. To Merleau-Ponty, for example, perception and expression are inseparable—the two functions, though divisible through analysis, are, in reality , one. To perceive is to express. The way in which our body is part of the world, inseparably united to it and to us, is comparable in part to a work of art—a work of art can be broken down, analyzed, criticized, but the analysis is never comparable to the original poem or painting, which holds in its particularity or individuality that unique unity or form which makes it a work of art.

Our body is not in space like things; it inhabits or haunts space. It applies itself to space like a hand to an instrument, and when we wish to move about we transport it without instruments as if by magic, since it is ours and because

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through it we have direct access to space. For us the body is much more than an instrument or a means; it is our expression in the world, the visible form of our intentions.¹

In dealing with this problem - a problem of synthesizing and ordering data which are often contradictory and lacking exterior relations - Merleau-Ponty uses categories borrowed from such divergent fields as aesthetic, psychology and anthropology. He uses the field theory of gestalt psychology, grounded in a category of language which is basically the language of art. The gestalt, the field, forms the raw material, the background. The subject, the human being, brings into focus the objects used and the other people that are recognized. All these come into being for people as they express themselves through the focus of their perception. And, at the same time, individuals are brought into focus by the forces which surround them. In a very real way, language is that manner of expression by which the human being both forms and is formed. There is no mind-subject as opposed to body-object, there is only the body-subject, that unity which expresses itself as the individual. All objects in the outside world become an extension of the human being, or more precisely can only be described as an extension of the central subject. On a higher level of complexity, this unique relationship of subject and object transcends the subject-predicate distinction entirely and the transformed subject now becomes describable in terms of process. The subject-predicate sentence becomes transformed into a verbal clause. "To be" becomes "being." The participle includes all segments of time and action, all objects, all moments, the subject itself, and becomes event.

To discover the origin of perception, it is therefore necessary to describe without preconceived notions of our act of perception. Language is the key, because language is the way by which each person, through their body, their means of expression, engage in that dialogue which is their own particular manner of existence in the world. "For contemporary psychology and psychopathology the body is no longer merely an object in the world, under the purview of a separated spirit. It is on the side of the subject; it is our point of view on the world, the place where the spirit takes on a certain physical and historical situation."²

People are committed to the use of their language and are inseparable from it. The poem teaches us to learn because in experiencing the poem we realize not that we are learning something new, but because, for an instant, our eyes focus and sometimes moves us from the outside. "It is not the object which obtains movements of accommodation and convergence from my eyes. It has been shown that on the contrary I would never see anything clearly, and there would be no object for me, if I did not use my eyes in such a way as to make a view of a single object possible".³ Consciousness is intentional - consciousness must always be consciousness of something. In the same way that we are aware of our body, in that same way we, through our body, recognize and deal with the world. Our body is the extension of our intentional faculty, it is a tool which enables us not to be in the world, but to inhabit the world. But our conscious-

Art is not imitation...
It is a process of expressing.

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ness plays a trick on us. We live in a field, but we are directed toward that image or object which serves our need and in this direction, much in the manner of a movie close-up, we lose recognition of the field or horizon which enables this perception to exist. We lose sight of the relevance of true perception and define perceiving as what we see.

Art not only focuses our eyes, it teaches us how to see. The language of art is not the seeing, and it is only through “seeing” that other objects exist, that the dialogue between one individual and another, between individuals and themselves is possible. “The landscape thinks itself in me,” he [Cezanne] said, “and I am its consciousness.” Art is not imitation, nor is it something manufactured according to the wishes of instinct or good taste. It is a process of expressing.”⁴

Speech is deceptive. To Phenomenologists or other philosophers like Merleau-Ponty it does not seem overtly to have material connections to the outside world. But this is a fallacious conclusion. Anyone who has dealt with the “word” as an artistic medium knows that it is just as physical a concept as “paint.” The point is that the word is more than meaning. The word is rhythm. It is sound. It holds a variety of textures and shapes. Style arises not only from meaning, it arises from the attributes that belong to words as physical objects - their length, their weight, their shape.

In our attempt to bring the background into focus, we must not lose the object. And it is precisely this that art does not do. But we must return to a symbolic understanding of experience as the basis of a relevant, scientific method. It is not necessary to prove experience, but it is necessary to understand it. We live in a society that trains us to react to names. It is time we not only learn, but that we experience, what those names mean.

1. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception*, (Northwestern University Press, 1964), p.5.

2. Ibid.

3. Merleau-Ponty, *Signs* (Northwestern University Press, 1964) p. 66.

4. Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-Sense* (Northwestern University Press, 1964), p.17.

The Creative Process as a Form of Resistance

Luis Nieves Falcón

The creative process is perhaps the single criterion which best attests to the basic humanity inherent in every person. It's fundamental for oppressed people anywhere in the world since the dominating classes, through the ideology of domination, tend to question the human condition of the dominated person. In consequence, creativity becomes for the dispossessed of the world an instrument for individual and collective recuperation. Why is this so?

On the one hand, the dominating ideology espouses the idea of a sub-human condition for the oppressed peoples as a way of justifying the socio-economic disadvantaged position in which they are placed. From this categorization flow the myths developed about exploited people: dominated people like to be dominated; dominated people are basically responsible for their own situation; dominated people need an overseer to guide them; dominated people are like small children, they really never grow up; dominated people act only at the most instinctual levels: eat, sleep and fornicate. This effort to dehumanize the oppressed is socially reproduced by the principal ideological instruments of power. These persistently emphasize a negative depicting of the oppressed and of any social or cultural element attached to him /her. No element is allowed to enhance the image of the dominated person.

In opposition to this perverted image arises the process of creative imagination. The threatening relationship posed by creativity goes more or less, like this: Creative imagination is a human attribute. There are elements of creativity in the oppressed. The oppressor is human. In consequence, there is an essential equality between the oppressor and the oppressed. That unavoidable finding regarding the mutuality of the human essence between the dominator and the dominated threatens the whole oppressive condition; because it disrupts the scheme of inherent inequality which gives support to oppression and its accompanying elements of racism, sexism and subordination.

The process of creative imagination has other disturbing effects on the oppressive condition: it allows the subordinated person to shatter the world of rigid absolutes which engulfs him/

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LUIS NIEVES FALCÓN

her; it allows him/her to destroy the myth that there is no way of breaking away from the world of oppression. In fact, creative imagination becomes a significant contradiction to the inalterability of fate, of *el sino*, *el destino* irrevocable. The truth is that through the creative imagination the individual can rethink anew his/her situation; new ways can be invented to destroy the constraints around the subjugated person and those alternatives creatively developed may become behavior oriented goals against the condition of oppression.

From the above, it may be clearly seen why any creative person is basically a subversive person. The creative process involves a basic challenge to the official world, to the world of the status quo. And the objects of creation are the most obvious manifestation of the opposition to the contested world.

The political prisoners and Prisoners of War are subversive persons because they dared to challenge existing norms supporting the prevailing system of exploitation and oppression in present U.S.A. They imaginatively created alternatives to challenge the system of injustice and inequality. They were captured and put away for life in isolated cells with the express purpose of destroying them physically and emotionally. The prisoners responded with new avenues of creative imagination to support themselves spiritually against the jailors; but also to make incarceration another space for the continuation of the political struggle. The net result has been the conquest of the prison environment, the conquest of the isolation milieu by the prisoners rather than the decimation of the prisoners by their incarceration for life.

The transformation of the prison condition is equivalent to the transformation of the dominated condition outside. The prison condition confirms to the prisoners the importance of creative imagination in our lives, because it is a dimension of freedom. They realize that it is not only an important instrument to advance social and economic change but also indispensable to understand the real needs and the real meaning of individual and collective freedom. Its development during incarceration, in various forms, provides the prisoner with the opportunity to link political struggle and survival in a hostile environment. It offers the prisoner the opportunity to go beyond the static and inflexible parameters imposed by the jailors. In fact, the subversive element of creative imagination allows prisoners to go beyond the wire, to go beyond the bars to join the comrades who are outside the reach of the oppressors, also fighting for the destruction of the oppressive condition and the recuperation of the human being. In that sense, creative imagination from the cell, from the isolation unit, from the prison in the prison, is a form of resistance. To resist the degradation imposed by the jailors; to resist the dehumanization of the prisoner; to reaffirm his or her indomitable spirit. The true meaning of the dimension of liberation inherent in creative imagination is admirably presented by Susan Rosenberg from the literary perspective.

THE CREATIVE PROCESS AS RESISTANCE

She says, in talking about Poems from the jail:

Poems are a gift for me in the late time.
My time for myself. I think of night
and how it draws its knees up near me,
and settles in, singing its light and its mysteries.
I think of the countless numbers
of us who put down the pen to pick up
other tools, and how of necessity we are
returned to the pen.
I think of the poet who said
“I curse the poetry of those who do not take sides.”
I think the torture, the degradation, and the
humiliation that the enemy inflicts on us all
is to teach us, to force us to lose the memory of ourselves.
So, in that poetry becomes a weapon that guides
us to the future.
Opening the heart to love, to justice, to dignity,
and to a freedom the enemy knows nothing of.
To be willing to give everything to achieve
that/ allows poetry/ to course through all
of us/ like a revolutionary elixir.

It can be seen the resistance in words, in the spirit which they communicate and which
force us to conclude that there is but only one fate: Venceremos, we shall overcome!

July 28, 1990

ALICE AND CARLOS, THREE STORIES

Margaret Randall

“ . . . we cannot develop and print a memory.”
—Henri Cartier-Bresson

Can I call it Alice's story? All I knew were a few of the corners, tangled years sloughed off in memory.

Alice was a big woman. Stately, large-boned: those would have been the words used by people for whom it was all right to be big. A few might have said Amazonian. We were raised in an era of pinched waists. Petite as eager necessity. The chin and eyes tilted upwards in admiration and support for the men we were learning to adore in every possible way. Definitely a preview to today's wistful anorexic disappearance act.

But Alice would not disappear. Her carriage was a statement. The clean openness of her face, eyes that took you in, straight on. Her eyes challenged me. The woman Alice told me in her bearing she was big and beautiful. And she moved through her days with a particular grace.

Alice was big. She looked down or straight across and took long effortless strides, picking up one or another of her three small children with a strong yet gentle arm, gesturing endless amusement with the other. Endless possibility. She most often wore dirndl skirts, the New Mexican marriage of Indian and old Mexican striped or solid chambray. Sandals and simple peasant blouses. And her breasts were heavy, full, very beautiful.

Alice was an artist. She painted and made prints, shaped clay pots in her large hands, demanded space for her work, and art was that work of hers. But she was also a wife. A housewife and a mother. Her husband, Jack, was a university professor, an artist too, and accepted as such in the community. Professional, artist: identities not in conflict.

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Alice's three small children—and they were hers, in every daily battle—were towheads. Smelling of soggy crackers, they trailed loose wet diapers across a cluttered floor. Alice looked at her husband. Lifted and set down her children. Entering a room, she spoke, or her voice came from the next room over, the next project, something she was explaining or showing. Her focus seemed always for the work.

Perhaps I didn't really understand that then. Or, I didn't understand what must be sacrificed to that. It was part of the mystery, its staying power when she was gone. "Alice is strange," people would say. I couldn't, then, have articulated all that they meant by that, nor exactly how I felt her presence and her strength. But I knew I wanted to be close to her.

I do not remember the order:

Alice married to an artist, Jack. Alice herself an artist. Alice's work unnoticed. Sometimes not even getting done. Alice's work beginning to gain recognition. Was that the way it went? "Alice got a lucky break! She's been commissioned to paint a mural for the First National Bank Building!" Was that how it was?

Years later people spoke about twenty murals, one on every floor of that building which was then the city's only skyscraper. As if I should have known: there were twenty, not one. But I couldn't remember. Three decades later, when I returned to my city, visiting the murals would be a pilgrimage.

Alice was big. She was crazy. She had a husband. He was a professor, you know. And children. Her work was just beginning to be noticed. She painted those murals. Then Alice and Jack separated. They came apart. He came apart. Nothing much was said. His sadness and her anxiety were noted. A silence grew.

Alice was sick. She was very sick for a while, and when my mother visited her in the hospital she said "I don't eat anymore." But later no one knew exactly what Alice's sickness should be called. They couldn't find "anything wrong." "There's nothing wrong," they said. "It's all in her head...psychological...you know how women are..." And Alice went home, felt better, walked through her house with those long strides of hers, picking up a child, pointing out a slash of color, the contour of a clay pot.

Then Alice was dead.

Alice died swiftly. Did someone find her? Someone must have. Was there surprise? Was there another story, crouching behind the first? No one said suicide, but the word hung in the

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air, displaced. No one mentioned the name of an illness. Her illness had no name. No one pronounced a syllable, a word, there were no answered questions. The children disappeared. They must have gone with their father. Once, several years later in Mexico City, he appeared on our doorstep. I came from the market to find him sitting there, head down, his sorrow like a blanket. Over two or three days: a half dozen words.

Alice began to visit me then. Over these years she has spoken to me of necessary space. When the angry demands of men close in, threatening to leave me without room for words or images, Alice appears, looking straight into my eyes. However I turn my head, she meets my gaze. Her large hand always palm-open, signaling. She makes me look at my work, at the space it occupies.

IN 1984 when I returned to Albuquerque, I wanted to visit the murals. I had never seen them complete. After initial weeks, in which I could go nowhere, I began driving past the building—now one of many such high rise structures standing for progress, for change.

One day, almost a year after I arrived, a friend and I talked as we drove. I looked up. There it was. We had time, why not? And I turned the car into the parking lot, explaining as we almost ran, entering the space, pushing the glass doors, asking about the murals.

“What murals?”

All the walls were office-gray. Nobody seemed to know. “Not in this building,” one smiling secretary after another told us as we went from floor to floor. I unwilling to give up, not ready to say this did not happen, it was a dream, something imagined into memory.

Then on the fifth floor, the suggestion we go to the seventh. “The receptionist there has been longer than the rest of us. She might remember.” Up we went. And she did. “Yes, they were beautiful,” she agreed. “It was a real shame when they painted them over. They were peeling, you know, flaking....” By way of explanation. “They needed repair...”

This is how they repaired Alice’s murals: by erasing them completely.

I went, then, numb into the elevator, out the glass doors, slowly back across the parking lot, wondering if there was a way in which Alice’s brush strokes might still inhabit that space, still visit the receptionists mix-and-matched on twenty floors. I wondered if the language of art can

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remain as a person does: presence and visitation.

Alice comes to me regularly now. Sometimes the folds of her white cotton blouse just graze the corners of my mouth when I rise before dawn to write or work in the darkroom. I smell her freshness beyond inks and chemicals. The odor of wet crackers Senlin, Gracie or Carlos trailed as they laughed and ran.

Now I must tell a second story.

In the Albuquerque to which I returned in 1984, homeless people claim a space as they do across this country; a wandering, shifting, growing group of men and women for whom a roof, a job, “adjustment to society,” are no longer givens but pieces of memory that have broken and fallen between the cracks.

On Central Avenue, along the few blocks that border the university, some of the homeless have become permanent fixtures: living from handout to handout, taking small shelter in doorways, foraging for scraps of food in the garbage bins behind El Patio or Pizza Hut.

One of these was The Rag Man. Some called him, simply, Rags. Ageless as so many who shun ambition are, he possessed three qualities that set him apart. He was more than repulsively dirty. He was more than commonly angry. And he enjoyed being given some item or other which he would carefully pin to his tattered clothing. He liked bright colors especially, and often a student or someone in the neighborhood would present him with a cluster of ribbons, a strand of bright yarn, a bit of tinsel, a feather. Rags sometimes walked up close to people, threatening our composure with his sour breath or the sting of his eyes. His words particularly pierced the carefully protected cleanliness of our determined forward-motion. He would suddenly be there, close to a face, spewing a barrage of crude obscenities. Later, someone would remember: “Sometimes he could be the meanest bastard....”

Rags was angry. Through the breakdown of conventional propriety, his anger seemed the one thing holding him together.

And so The Rag Man inspired fear in people. Some tended boundaries, tried to avoid allowing him too close. Some made a public point of dealing with his conduct. There was the winter he crawled beneath a second-hand shop called The Birdsong and lit a fire to keep warm. The place nearly went up in flames. A young woman student of mine once turned in a story she’d written about her relationship with Rags. She recounted a real or imagined afternoon on

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which she had invited him to her home, conversed with him at her table, offered him lunch.

I don't remember exactly when Rags began sleeping out in the small parking alley behind my brother's bookstore. It took getting used to the image to be able to distinguish the man's lead body wrapped in a dirty blanket or covered with scraps of cardboard. Then someone discarded a sofa, its stuffings running out through slits and sores in worn upholstery. Rags slept on the sofa, and he could be seen there dreaming through days as well as nights. The angry outbursts close up in the face of a passerby became less frequent. Maybe the man was tired.

And then The Rag Man was murdered.

It might have been for his money. Local lore had it his family kept him in small cash, perhaps paying him to stay away. He didn't beg, yet rarely lacked for coins. It might have been a message from area merchants, to try to clear the neighborhood of homeless people. There was conjecture. Perhaps someone robbed him while he slept, beat or stabbed him, then soaked the body in gasoline and set it on fire. Or maybe someone set him on fire without looking for cash. Just for something to do.

The flames raged at three or four in the morning. No one expects the police investigation to offer answers. But the people are speaking their own language of caring. Two or three, sometimes more, come to linger where the flames rose. Flowers, cigarettes, notes, poems, appear on the spot where Rags was killed. Crosses and messages have been painted on the blackened wall. One poem signed by Kippa D. (age 15) says "....I envy you raggedy man/ your will to live another day..." One night this altar too goes up in flames. The next day it reappears.

But it is the published obituary that quickens memory in my eyes, once again wets my lips in longing then throws me to my feet. For it tells me the Rag Man was Alice Garver's youngest son, Carlos. He was 34. Survived, the papers say, by a brother in Alameda, California. A married sister in Albuquerque. "Carlos Garver was the son of Alice M. Garver, a painter specializing in Southwestern murals who died in 1966, and Jack Garver, a painter and sculptor who died last year."

Carlos' sister Grace McCoy speaks through the lines of the daily: "He was very imaginative, very creative, a very likeable guy. He was very artistic. He loved to write. One of his hopes when I last spoke to him was to get a garage or a little room so he could draw. He still had it in him." The article went on to say that Carlos was strung out on drugs from the age of 15, that he'd been on the streets since 1973. He had been treated at several mental institutions and

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his father tried to get him committed. But his sister Grace explained, “He would walk away, he would leave whenever it cramped his style.”

The third story would have to be a question.

Would I find the answer if Alice appeared right now, if I could ask her about her own beginnings. How it was in her childhood, what passed as tenderness or rage between her own mother and father? How food was set out, or not, upon their early table? What flesh touched flesh, and how? Where the dark places on her way to school cried out, how they might have held her wrist or emptied her eyes of song?

How did Alice choose Jack, and Jack Alice? Could she know her longings then? Were they forced to write the ritual of blood upon their sheets? Where did form and color stumble, fall, then pull themselves upright, growing against the tender side of skin? What happened to the art undone because of Senlin, because of Grace, because of Carlos? Or, put another way, which pictures belong to each of them? Was Senlin's canvas sold for money or for love? Did Alice offer the etchings made in Grace's name to a friend whose presence was unmentioned on her tongue? And what about Carlos?

I was fresh and muddled back then. I didn't really know if Alice and Jack belonged to my parents or to me. Sometimes I wondered, and my shoulders ached. My eyes learned to assume a serious knowing expression, I would nod my head thoughtfully, and avoid having to move through precise language when asked what I thought about a concept I didn't know or a name I'd never heard.

At twenty, knowing people like Alice and Jack, I had to begin halfway through a conversation among peers. They were eight or ten years older. It made a difference then. Today when she visits, Alice and I talk about these things. And I do not let the empty places bloat or gag in silence. Now I ask. I tell.

The third story would have to be a question containing within itself another question which in turn holds another and another, each new wondering smaller than the one in which it lives, like the Dutch Cleanser figure with the can of Dutch cleanser upon which an ever diminishing little girl in folkloric cap and wooden shoes offers yet another can of cleanser and another and another. Like Sandra Cisneros' eleven-year-old birthday experience, holding within it the ages of ten, nine, seven, six, five, four, three, two, and one.

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If I ask why Jack's Mexican voice did not rise about a whisper, I also need to know what Alice's eyes were fixed on when she died. If I walk the journey backwards from the fire that ended Carlos' angry life, I must wade through the unforgiving temperature of a winter dawn, bits of colored yarn, a sister's right to her own map, the place of art in a woman's hands.

Alice, I am afraid. Will my own unknotted threads trap my eyes, my mouth, tangle a detour before the finish-line appears? These three stories no longer own beginnings, mid-points, ends. They are about process, how things happen because some other unnamed something happened first, wherever we come or go without insisting upon our space, the right to own our hands.

-Hartford, Connecticut, Winter, 1988

The Tribunal on Violations of Human Rights of Political/POW Prisoners in the US

Luis Nieves Falcón

Historically the development of a philosophy on individual human rights has been grounded on the notion that fundamental human rights stem from attributes inherent to human beings. Their collective disregard or violation is sufficient cause for people deprived of their basic human rights to seek redress of their grievances outside the normative sphere prevailing in a particular society at a particular moment, since the official normative sphere may constitute itself a principle source of such violations. This conceptual relationship has been most clearly established in the North American Declaration of Independence where it is clearly stated:

“...all men are created equal... they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights... among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness... when a long train of abuses and usurpations pursuing invariably the same object evinces a design to reduce them (the people) under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security.”

These principles sustained the armed struggle which the original 13 colonies waged against English colonialism in America. It is the first expression to question prevailing dogmas assuming a divine justification for oppression and subordination.

The repudiation of behavior violative of human dignity by authorities of the state and the belief in the right of the people to search for a redress of their grievances are fundamental sources of inspiration for the French Revolution of 1789, the Latin American Revolutions of 1808 and the Russian Revolution of 1917. All these liberation struggles consolidate the principle that the people have the right to use all means at their disposal, including armed struggle, to get rid of a despotic regime which threatens their life, their liberty and their pursuit of happiness.

The use of despotic and tyrannic behavior to oppress people is a crime which justifies redress by those subjected to it. This is the legal principle established at the International Tribunal of Nuremberg which, in expanding previous dimensions, concludes:

The use of despotic and tyrannic behavior to oppress people is a crime which justifies redress by those subjected to it.

... murder, extermination, imposition of slavery, deportation or any other inhuman act committed against the civil population... including persecution on account of political, racial or religious reasons, whether they are considered or not violations to the national law where they are committed, constitute a crime against humanity.”

A crime against humanity is one that not only affects an individual but is offensive to the whole conscience of humanity in so far as it has destructive effects over the possibilities of civilized living. The legal principles laid down at Nuremberg were defined within the context of an armed conflict. But, on 11 December 1946 the United Nations adopted the juridical principles of Nuremberg without restricting them to a situation of war. In this way, they expanded their international scope and the obligation for all member states to abide by them.

Further development of the concept that some crimes transcend national boundaries and are offensive to all humanity, and all member states should assist in their eradication, moved the U.N. to declare genocide, apartheid and colonialism a crime against humanity. And, like in 1776, 1789, 1808 and 1917 people subjected to those crimes have a right to use all means at their disposal to overcome the detrimental effects of such criminal actions.

The crimes against humanity represent a tremendous challenge to the so-called “Occidental democracies” since many of their leading countries have been habitual offenders. On this side of the Atlantic, the U.S. has been a principal promoter of genocide, racism and colonialism with particular reference to Native Americans, African-Americans, Mexicanos, and Puerto Ricans. In this regard it is significant to point out that the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide which was approved in 9 December 1948 and put into effect on 12 January 1951 was not ratified by the U.S. Congress until 18 July 1985, only with reservation, and went into effect on 4 November 1988, forty-four years after it was approved by the United Nations. Additionally, the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid which was adopted on 30 November 1973 and put into effect on 18 July 1976 was never signed by the United States; the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment adopted on 10 December 1984 and put into effect on 26 June 1987 has not been signed by the United States; and, the U.S. opposed the classification of colonialism as a crime against humanity as well as the United Nations resolution to terminate colonialism by the year 2000.

The behavior described previously with regard to those international instruments and national behavior inside the U.S.A. tends to clearly indicate that there is no effective recourse for the grievances of these nationalities within the official structure of the U.S. Government. Thus, the fate of Native Americans as a perpetually subordinated people was affirmed in 1831 when the U.S. Supreme Court, in *The Cherokee Nation vs. The State of Georgia* justified the continuous

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pillage of Indian territory stating:

“... If it be true that the Cherokee Nation have rights this is not the tribunal in which those rights are to be asserted. If it be true that wrongs have been inflicted, and that still greater are to be apprehended, this is not the tribunal which can redress the past or prevent the future.”

The door was widely opened to the crime of genocide against Indigenous Americans. It took the 73-day occupation of Wounded Knee in 1973 to bring the approval of the Self-Determination Act which has not solved either the economic exploitation nor the problem of Indian self-determination.

The subordinate condition of Black/New Afrikans is upheld in the infamous Dred Scott vs. Sanford case in 1857 where the U.S. Supreme Court declared:

“... the right of property in a slave is distinctly and expressly affirmed in the Constitution. The right to traffic in it, like an ordinary article of merchandise and property, was guaranteed to the citizens of the United States, in every state that might desire it... And the government in express terms is pledged to protect it in all future time, if the slave escapes from his owner... and no word can be found in the Constitution which gives Congress a greater power over slave property, or which entitles property of that kind to less protection than property of any other description...”

This again, opened the door to the southern apartheid, to the systematic lynching of Black people, the sharecropper repression in the 30 s, the criminalization of the Black Panther Party, the murder of civil rights activists, and Martin Luther King. The self-determination of the Black Nation has not been solved and “... hate crimes have tripled over the past seven years, many of them committed by young people...” who think their white skin confers privilege and superiority. There has been a rise in the number of openly racist organizations who preach violence and initiate attacks on African Americans.

Puerto Ricans have not faced any better. In 1901 the U.S. Supreme Court in De Lima vs. Bidwell stated:

“The Constitution confers absolutely upon the Government of the Union the power of making war and of making treaties; consequently that Government possesses the power of acquiring territory, either by conquest or by treaty.”

And then proceeds to indicate that Puerto Rico belongs to, but is not part of the United States. It belongs “to the Government of the United States, consisting of the President, the Senate, ... and the House of Representatives...”

This decision justifies the imperialistic expansionism of the United States who has ignored

ART OF RESISTENCE
Arte de Resistencia

let s redeem the agony
of the political prison-
ers. Because they are the
bridges to a new hope!

persistently the United Nations request that it allow Puerto Rico to exercise its right to self-determination and independence. The net result has been the systematic persecution of anti-colonial forces, the sterilization of one-third of women of child bearing age, the militarization of the country and the displacement of more than one-third of its population from their homeland.

As you can see, it comes as no surprise that individuals from these three oppressed national groups, and their supporters amongst White Americans, are the most prevalent among political prisoners in the U.S. They are people who are morally convinced that, like the 13 original colonies, they will not be able to get a redress for their grievances from the existing official normative structure.

In fact, that official structure has not only paid no attention to their claims but has shown a history of unremitting injuries which, in effect, prevent them from exercising their right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

Under such a predicament, individuals from these oppressed groups have called to their assistance the international legal principles which support their just cause. The reply of the U.S. government has been to ignore the applicability of international law, to deny the existence of political prisoners, to criminalize their behavior and incarcerate them for protracted periods of time in order to prevent their continued involvement in their reivindicative struggle. To make things worse, their conditions of incarceration are selectively discriminatory and violative of each and every one of the Standard Minimum Rules for the protection of persons subjected to detention or imprisonment, of which the United States is a signatory party.

What is there to do in order to change such conditions of a clearly tyrannical domination? At the national level there is the recourse of town meetings to bring into the open the whole issue of violations of human rights against oppressed national groups in the U.S. and White-Americans who have supported them. At the international level there is the possibility of a moral International Tribunal: one not vested with any power from the state but by the ethical conscience of humanity expressed through distinguished personalities from the world. This type of tribunal originated with the Bertrand Russell Tribunal that passed judgment on the crimes committed by the United States and other accomplice states against the people of Viet Nam. The Tribunal we are convening is a moral one. We are asking a group of eleven international jurists and personalities of moral rectitude to pass judgment on the conditions of political prisoners in the U.S., to examine the persistent violations of their human rights while incarcerated under the most degrading conditions and to condemn in no uncertain terms the “long train of abuses and usurpations” designed “to reduce them under absolute despotism”, and affirm their right to the pursuit of happiness as guaranteed both by international law and the U.S. Constitution.

Two basic considerations are necessary if the moral judgment we are requesting is to take place. First, we must help to break the impact of the economic subordination of Indigeneous Americans, Black/New Afrikans, Mexicanos and Puerto Ricans which prevents them from the

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accessibility to economic resources to help finance the design and implementation of strategies towards their own recuperation. They need your material help as of now. Be as generous as you can to make sure that the issue of human rights violations gets a fair chance of being aired publicly. Secondly, there is a need for a moral indignation condemning these crimes against all of humanity—genocide, racism and colonialism—violative of the inherent and inalienable rights endowed upon all human beings by their creator and which have become part and parcel of the power structure governing this country.

I am asking, that we all make the condition of suffering and exploitation of these persons our own personal situation. I invite each and every one of you to emotionally travel the roads to the prisons with me. To cross the barbed wire, to feel the metal doors close behind you and relate to Alejandrina Torres, one of our prisoners of war. Battered, raped, and isolated in an effort to force her to commit suicide. Unable to cry. There are no more tears to shed. Her body controlled by the jailers but her faith and her absolute hope that her people will be free have sustained her through this ordeal. Let us share her suffering with action.

I invite you to share with Alan Berkman the agony of his death. He knows he has cancer. He also knows that urgent medical treatment can save him. But the remedies are kept away from him by his jailers. He dies hour by hour while the sadistic bureau of prison officers enjoy his agony. His spirit gives him the strength to hope and wait. Let us join Alan in his suffering for his commitment to a more humanitarian society. Let us share his sacrifice in action.

I invite you to share with Leonard Peltier the trail of tears of his incarceration. Condemned to life imprisonment for a crime American authorities know he did not commit. A government who hid the exculpatory evidence to eliminate, by his incarceration, a defender of his people's rights. Let us share the deprivation of his liberty with action.

I invite you to share with Mumia Abu-Jamal the chilling silence of his cell while waiting for the final time to be moved to the death cell. For a crime he did not commit. But, for his engagement in the struggle for the betterment of his Black brothers and sisters. Let us all go in spirit to that jail and live in our own soul and body the oppression he is suffering for his dedication to freedom. Let us join Mumia Abu-Jamal in action.

Let us, brothers and sisters, commit ourselves to a continuous work towards the elimination of existing abuses against the political prisoners and help in culminating a strategy of redress that will assure their freedom. Because, brothers and sisters, their freedom, not only in the written context of the law but also in the experiential content of their daily lives, is an expansion of our own freedom; their liberation is an extension of our own liberation; and mutual liberation is an expression of love. Thanks to you all with the affection and love of all the political prisoners and prisoners of war in this country. Let's redeem their agony! Because they are the bridges to a new hope!

Catalogue of Exhibition

Sundiata Acoli
Milk Goddess Talking to Earth
Acrylic on canvas
20" x 16"

Tomie Arai
An Immigrant's Story
1990
Silkscreen
22" x 30"

Todd Ayoun
In Defense of the History of Self-Defense
1990
Acrylic on canvas
50" x 58"

Diógenes Ballester
Remembering
1990
Wax on paper
47 3/4" x 31 3/4"

Rudolf Baranik
Without Words
1972
Collage
25" x 20"

Lucy Berríos
Monchi
1989
Acrylic on canvas
17 1/2" x 22"

Lucy Berríos
Desde Oller hasta Monchi
1989
Acrylic on canvas
29 1/2" x 41"

Vernon Bigman
Untitled
1990
Mixed
14" x 14"

Willie Birch
Laughing to Keep from Crying, Sculpture
1990
Painted paper mache
23 x 16 1/2 " x 12 1/2"

Tim Blunk
Free All Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War
1990
mixed media
18" x 14"

Roy Brown
Elizam: Pueblo Negro
Video
6 minutes

Analida Burgos
Alejandrina Torres
1988
Silkscreen
18" x 22 1/2"

Galería El Bohío
605 E. 9th St.

Opening
December 6, 1990

Exhibition
December 6-22

M-F 2:00-6:00 pm
Sat. 12:00-5:00 pm

Carole Byard
Certain Inalienable Rights
1990
Mixed
20" x 26"

Paul Carroll
Urban Pride
1987
Oil on canvas
44" x 60"

Luis Camnitzer
From the Uruguayan Torture Series, four pieces
1983-84
Photo etching
4 pieces 22" x 30"

Tony Castillo
Don Pedro
1987
Silkscreen
20" x 24"

Tony Castillo
Doble Identidad
1987
Oil on canvas
30" x 30"

Shu Lea Cheang
Just Cause
3 Plastic Panels, Photo Reproduction and text
4' x 1.5'

Luis Colón Osorio
Coquí
1986
Acrylic on canvas board
18" x 24"

Luis Colón Osorio

Untitled
1986
Acrylic on canvas board
18" x 24"

Ralph Deromero
Y Abajo También Hay Luz
1987
Acrylic on canvas
48" x 72"

Maxine De Seta
Buried Alive
1990
White gloss housepaint on canvas
60" x 24"

Sylvia de Swaan
Act-up Action
1989
Print
13" x 9"

Maria Domínguez
Untitled
1990
Oil on Canvas
24" x 36"

Elizam Escobar
Untitled
1990
acrylic on canvas
71" x 43"

Leon Golub
White Squad
1987
Litho
29 1/2" x 41 1/2"

Pete Gourfain

We re All in the Same Boat
Banner
13' x 6'

Sara Haviland
Sky Arch
1990
Acrylic on Pilwood
40" x 43" x 16"

Miriam Hernández
Ex/Sample
1990
Acrylic and pastel on canvas
20 1/4" x 14"

Miriam Hernández
Strong Drink
1990
Acrylic and pastel on canvas
10" x 8"

Arlan Huang
Us: How long does it take to wear down a mountain?
Them: Listen! We ve already loosened the belt. In time,
we ll probably loosen more, Do you understand?
Us: As long as it will take.
Gesso, acrylic, steel zinc foil
40" x 72"

Carlos Irizarry
Grito de Liberación
1982
Oil and masonite
4' x 6'

Cliff Joseph
Attica Crucifixion
1972
Oil on canvas
16" x 20"

Cliff Joseph
The Separatist
1966
Oil on canvas
16" x 20"

William Jung
Am I my brother s Keeper II
Oils
35" x 41"

ibn Kenyatta
Judicial Lynching of Eve
1990
Pencil drawing
23" x 27"

Michael Lebrón
Requiem 1479
Photo Composite
19 1/4" x 152"

Glen Ligon
Untitled
1990
Oil on canvas
10" x 42"

Whitfield Lovell
Bird
1989
Oil stick and charcoal on paper
25" x 38"

Manuel Macarulla
Animal Sanctuary
1990
Oil mixed media
25 1/8 " x 9 3/4" x 9 3/4"

Vilma Maldonado Reyes

Las Amazonas
1986
Acrylic
28" x 34"

Vilma Maldonado Reyes
Macheteras (Espartanas)
1990
Acrylic on canvas
40" x 50"

Pablo Marcano García
Rumbo Norte
1985
Oil on canvas
32" x 36"

Pablo Marcano García
Madera y papel
1983
Oil on canvas
24" x 30"

Stephanie Mar
Illuminations
1990
Paper, wood ink, mixed media
10" x 10" x 10"

Adolfo Matos
Don Pedro
1987
Copper etching
24" x 24"

Isabel Nazario
Untitled
1990
Oil on Canvas
20" x 25"

Julio Nazario
1. Juan 2. Coco 3. Titi
Photography, Black and White
9 x 13

Zydnia Nazario
Battle of Vieques
Video
40 minutes

Shirin Neshart
Untitled
1990
Acrylic on wood collage
24" x 30"

Susan Ortega
Freedom Now
1990
Charcoal on paper
19" x 24"

Lloyd Oxendine
Untitled
1990
Acrylic, mixed media
72" x 28"

Frank Palaia
Public Affair
1990
Plastic, paper and cloth
12" x 6"

Teddy Peguero
The Long and Sinuous Road to Justice
1986
Oil on canvas
36" x 47 3/4"

Cara Pearlman
Untitled
1990
Skrim and latex paint
5 1/2" x 8 1/2"

Howardina Pindell
Autobiography: Air/CS560
Acrylic tempera, oil stick, blood (the artist s)
paper, polymer-photo transfer and vinyl type
on sewn canvas.
87" x 84"

Kristen Reed
E Pluribus Unum
1989
Oil on paper
23" x 29"

Denis Mario Rivera
Filiberto Ojeda Ríos
1988
Woodcut
42" x 54"

Carlos Raquel Rivera
Monte Muñido
1990
Silkscreen
29" x 20"

Carlos Raquel Rivera
La Masacre de Ponce
1968
Linoleum
16" x 20"

Sophie Rivera
Shadows
Photography, black and white
8" x 10"

Rafael Rivera Rosa
Hasta La Libertad
1986
Silkscreen
29" x 21"

Rafael Rivera Rosa
La muerte lo sorprendió en el campo
1979
Woodcut
25" x 40"

Susan Rosenberg
Intifada
Watermarkers
11" x 9"

Juan Sánchez
Entre Líneas
1989
Oil, mixed media on Canvas
28" x 90 1/4"

Peter Horn Sarabella
Jesus is Mohawk now
1989
mixed media
36" x 48" x 6"

Peter Horn Sarabella
Mohawk American
1988
Mixed media
36" x 48" x 8"

Michael Shaughnessy
Ash over Northern town
Ash, steel, rug
60" x 30" x 6"

Clarissa Slien
Who we love
1988
Silkscreen
23" x 28

Gustavo Silva
Untitled, two pieces
1990
Mixed media
36" x 36"

Nancy Spero
A Torture in Chile
1975
Lithograph
22 1/2" x 30"

Alejandro Stuart
Por Granada
1984
Photography, black and white
16" x 20"

Alejandro Stuart
Por Zapata
1979
Mixed media
16" x 20"

May Stevens
Ordinary Extraordinary I
1984
Lithograph
18 x 21 1/2"

Diosa Summers Fitzgerald
Ghost Dance I, II
1989
Watercolor, gouache, pen and ink, collage
22" x 30"

Heraldo Torres
The Musician
1985
Bo colored lead pencil on paper
30" x 22"

John Pitman Weber
The Armful of Flowers
1990
Acrylic on board
20" x 22"

Rachel Wysoker
The Scream
1990
Acrylic on board
20" x 22"

Hamlet Zurita
Claustrophobia 1 & 2
1988
Mixed media on glass
50 x 40

The following artists have also joined the exhibit:

Benny Andrews
Pena Bonito
Houston Conwill
Melain Edwards
Janet Henry
Betty Kano
Tom Manning
Hector Marín Arias
Yong Soon Min
Jorge Nedavitch
Catalina Parra
Mary Patten
Kiki Smith



Tomie Arai • Benny Andrews • Todd Young • Diógenes Ballester • Rudolf Baranik • Vernon Bigman • Willie Birch • Tim Blunk • Pena Bonito • Analida Burgos • Carole Byard • Luis Camnitzer • Tony Castillo • Shu Lea Cheang • Houston Conwill • Ralph DeRomero • Sylvia DeSwaan • María Dominguez • Elizam Escobar • Melvin Edwards • Pablo Marcano García • Leon Golub • Peter Gourfain • Sara Haviland • Janet Henry • Miriam Hernández • Arlan Huang • Carlos Irizarry • Cliff Joseph • William Jung • Betty Kano • Leon Klayman • Michael Lebrón • Glen Ligon • Whitfreid Lovell • Vilma Maldonado Reyes • Manuel Macarulla • Tom Manning • Hector Marín Arias • Stephanie Mar • Adolfo Matos • Yong Soon Min • Isabel Nazario • Julio Nazario • Zydna Nazario • Shirin Neshat • Susan Ortega • Lloyd Oxendine • Frank Palaia • Catalina Parra • Mary Patten • Teddy Pequero • Cara Perlman • Howardina Pindell • Kristen Reed • Carlos Raquel Reed • Denis Mario Rivera • Sophie Rivera • Rachel Romero • Rafael Rosa • Juan Sánchez • Peter Horn Sarabella • Michael Shaughnessy • Gustavo Silva • Kiki Smith • Susan Rosenberg • Nancy Spero • May Stevens • Diosa Summers Fitzgerald • John P. Weber • Rachel Wysoker • Hamlet Zurita •

